you're like a party (you taste like new year)

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by silverwolfbunny

Summary

Grace's parents want her to play nice with other rich kids. She invites her poly-quad along for the ride.

Notes

for the prompt: "What would your OTP do at a party?"

hope you enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes

Grace isn't much of a mingler. She's a friendly face, when she wants to be—hard to lead a cult otherwise—but that *want* is testamount. Still, the price of freedom is steep: if she wants to be here—**home**, in the real world—then that means being a Monroe. And being a Monroe means being a *mingler*.

It's New Year's Eve. It's a party.

How hard can it be?

The party isn't exactly a rager, but it's...messy. Disorienting. There's laughter and shouting and awful music playing over speakers that aren't nearly as good as the price likely implied.

It makes Simon wrinkle his nose. He's still a bit of an ameteur when it comes to tech, but even he can tell that tinny sound is worth less than the change in his pocket, let alone whatever stupid price the rich jackasses who own this house toss out their car window every day.

Grace smirks and kisses his knuckles, finally breaking her silent streak. "It's just a house party," she tells him, smirking as if he can't feel her hand trembling in his own. "And it'll probably be full of jerks that are way too easy to convince into doing funny stuff."

"I thought we weren't doing that anymore," Simon deadpans, face still just as grumpy as before. A part of him misses all the fucked up shit they used to do. Nothing feels quite real outside the train. He needs that rush.

"Yeah, but..." She shrugs and leans her head against his arm. The way she looks up at him, her thick lashes as dark as her eyes, leaves his stomach full of butterflies. "Rich kids don't count, right?"

She turns to Lake for backup, but finds the chrome girl already gone, Jesse along with her. Simon hadn't even noticed them leave.

"Ugh," Grace groans. "We already lost half the polycule. Just you and me, then, huh, Simon?"

Simon raises an eyebrow. "Always has been, Gracie." He's certain she'll ditch him about ten minutes in, at the latest, but if she wants to be sweet, he'll let her. "Always will be."

Lake is determined not to take her eyes off Jesse for even a second. He doesn't need a babysitter, no, but she's his friend, his lover, and his denizen—it's her job to guide him away from familiar mistakes. Nobody chooses to be born and few choose their purpose in life, but if she really was created by the Train just to care for humans, well... She'll take care of hers, because she chooses to.

She has to be there for him, even if just to be sure he won't fall back into his old maladaptive habits of people-pleasing. Not because he's her passenger, but because he's her best friend.

Because he *chose* her and she's choosing him.

Jesse likes talking to people, despite how often they really don't deserve to talk to him, but with her help, he'll hopefully avoid people that are too much like the old "friends" he used to have. The kids that hurt him, hurt *Nate*. It only takes a bit of steering him around, but he's happy to avoid the majority of the crowd, especially the mean-looking white kids that are too busy flashing cash to notice the way the lights catch her chrome buzzcut.

He's learned his lesson. "Or, if I haven't," he admits to her, he's at least more afraid to tell his therapist about his slip-up than he is afraid to avoid creepy jocks. With her help, he seeks out the nerds and the weirdos to the best of his ability.

It's not easy hunting; after all that, it's starting to look like they went and left their nerd and weirdo at the door.

Hopefully the polycule will come together on its own soon. For now, it's time to make the Monroes regret ever trying to tell Grace when and where to be.

It's not even 10 P.M and already, Simon is pouting alone in the corner of the main room, the very definition of a wallflower. He tries to plan out bits of his novel while he's standing there bored, but it's a little difficult to focus with the sounds of people talking about rich kid bullshit grating so sharply on his nerves. He can't take it—can't even pretend to for Grace's sake, which is saying something—and before long, he's off looking for a place he can find some quiet.

Despite herself, Grace avoids mingling, and not on purpose either. She's uncomfortable, too stressed out from memories of dance class and her parents' dinner parties and everything that happened with the Apex to really stop dissociating long enough to say a real 'hello' to anyone. Plus, all this computer talk is still way too confusing. She doesn't know what a LinkedIn is and she isn't going to be able to figure it out with all the noise (both external and internal). She's a smart cookie, but she's well-beyond dissolving in the milk, and it's starting to catch up to her.

Eventually, she just has to give it up and does the same thing Simon probably did, considering she can't find him anywhere. Holding on desperately to her sanity, she starts looking for a place she can calm herself down. Once she can breathe again, she'll be able to figure out where her boyfriend ran off to. And if not him, then her other sweethearts. Maybe one of them can even tell her what the actual fuck a LinkedIn is.

She's never wanted to bury her face in Jesse's jacket this badly before. When she find them again, Grace is going to curl up into one of the pockets on Lake's weird goth pants and never come out.

Jesse is trying to have a good time, but he can see Lake is getting annoyed by the constant pressure of peoples' eyes on her, their assumptions about her, their invasive questions about her appearance. One minute they're laughing about her being a Martian (what?), the next

they're making comments about her butch fit that wouldn't have been acceptable in 2009, let alone nowadays. When they ask if she's a lesbian, she says yes. When they ask if she's a man, she says yes. When they ask if she and Jesse are dating, she says yes.

"Um, *wow*," laughs one of the girls, rolling her eyes to the side. "That's *super* problematic."

"I'm a mirror image, dumbass. I reflect my partner."

"Yyyeah...but, *still*."

"You'll be **really** still in the grave—"

Jesse doesn't bother saying anything this time. He just 'accidentally' knocks the girls red solo cup with his elbow, soaking her $90+ plain white T-shirt with—what, wine cooler? Beer? He has no idea what they're drinking and he doesn't care to find out.

He feels bad for pulling Lake away without saying anything, but when he stands up for her and tells them to knock it off and mind their business, he just gets shot weird looks. They just stare at him like kids his age always do when he talks about vampires, or animals, or swimming, or anything that might dare to remind them that he's one of those mythical *American Indians* they saw in a Family Guy 'funny moments compilation'. They just laugh and cringe and say some fucked up racist settler shit—

Aaaand there goes his good mood.

Not that he had much of one to begin with, granted, but a negative value there isn't exactly new to him. It doesn't matter how little he has, kids like this are always going to dig their grabby little hands in and—

Okay. *Ohh-kay*. Time to calm down, Jesse. Time to chill.

Lake pulls her wrist out of Jesse's grip, but only to take Jesse's hand, rolling her thumb over his knuckles in a show of support (and a touch of gratitude, maybe?), and then flips their new "friends" the bird. They probably can't see it, but it makes him feel a little better anyways.

Jesse happily allows his girlboyfriend to take the lead. Lake's hand always looks so great in his—he'll always choose to stumble behind her if it means seeing the way her fingers fit so perfectly against his.

The tinny music blaring outside is a lot more tolerable behind the thick wooden door Simon has found himself behind. The music itself is trash, but it's better than silence, so—

BAM!

Simon is startled when the door to the bedroom he's broken into opens, but he relaxes twice as much when he sees Grace. He opens his mouth to make some half-joking complaint —'Don't you people ever knock?' No, no, man, something funnier—but stops short at the sight of her. Her face is far-away and scared, eyes glassy and wet and looking nowhere.

Immediately, he stands and leads her inside to sit on the bed.

"Hey, now," he murmurs. "You just breathe, okay? I'm here. You're not alone, Grace: I'm here for you. I'm right beside you."

Lake is a lot less pissed with Jesse by her side, but she's not in a great mood. She tells him authoritatively that they're going somewhere to make out and he grins, wide and bright, and does not argue.

Grace lays her head down in Simon's lap and grabs his hand to place over her hair. She doesn't care about frizzies; she just wants her Simon. After all these years, she probably needs a new 'do anyways.

Simon is gentle with her braids out of habit, scratching her scalp sweetly and avoiding pulling baby hairs too much. Her cheek is soft when he runs his thumb over her cheekbone, softer when he presses his lips to her warm skin.

Jesse opens the door before Lake gets a chance to try, a little too forceful with his eagerness. It slams open, making him and Lake jump—and startling Grace and Simon.
Lake moves a heavy dresser in front of the door to keep anyone from coming inside.
Jesse sits next to Simon and asks if Grace is okay, if Simon is okay, what happened, what do they need from him?

Simon kisses Jesse's cheek, too, then takes his hand to place it on Grace's back.

When Jesse starts rubbing slow circles through her shirt, Grace sighs and melts further into Simon's lap. When Jesse maneuvers himself under her, she melts into his lap too.

Lake stands by awkwardly with her hands in the pockets of her tripp pants. She never really knows where she stands in this little group of paramour passengers, even though she knows she's welcome beside them. She's been curled up between them in bed more than enough times that it shouldn't be so nerve-wracking, but she knows what she is.

She's just a denizen. A *null*. A cold, inhuman freak made of metal.

But somehow, despite all that, Grace and Simon reach for Lake's hand at the same time. She can feel the warmth of their skin as they pull her to sit on Simon's other side.
Lake meets eyes with Jesse, blushing, and they smile at each other. They'll make out later. Isn't that what New Years is for, anyways? Lake thinks she has a vague Tulip-memory of that.

Right now, though, Grace needs them.

Music thumps through the floor, through the walls, but inside this stranger's bedroom, they're all alone in the world. Just the four of them, safe, truly safe, and unapologetically tender.

They leave the party a little too early, but not before Lake can pocket a few things from the host of this bunk party. Some earrings, some sneakers, a book or two, all shoved into her

backpack or her pockets or down the side of her boot. That'll show this jerk for throwing a party that sucks and makes her quad miserable.

End Notes

thanks for reading

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